Patients Forums Project – Inclusivity Issues

Purpose of the Patient Forum reform

Patients' Forums are new structures for patient and the public involvement in the NHS,
which will extend into health issues generally. The aim is to give patients and communities a stronger voice in the NHS and also to influence other services that have an effect on
health. There will be over 600 Forums set up across the country, one for each NHS Trust and Primary Care Trust. It is important that Forums operate in a way that is open to all, so that there are no barriers to involvement for their local communities. This inclusivity will be key to their success.

Looking at different ways of working

The challenge for the Patients) Forum is that they can only be effective as drivers for
change if they manage to engage people who do not normally sit on committees. Work
has already been commissioned on how to make membership of a Patients Forum attractive to people. However,

- .It is acknowledged that certain sections of the community suffer greater health

-disadvantage than others. These groups may often be those who are not attracted by traditional methods of involvement.

- .In order to address these health inequalities, the voice of these groups needs to be heard in the NHS, just as loudly as the voice of the assertive, articulate patient who may find it easier to express their views.

- .Primary Care Trust Patients Forums will have an additional role in engaging with
organisations that provide services affecting health (e.g. transport or housing) and the same principle must apply to the way they work.

Therefore the project needs to be informed by learning already developed on innovative ways of working to achieve inclusiveness in community development,

Specific Questions to be explored

a) What do you see as the main obstacles to people getting involved, from the perspective of your organisation?

b) What recruitment methods are successful in making involvement accessible to people
who do not normally participate whether because of disability or other social barriers or who suffer health inequalities?

c) What innovative ways of community working have been developed to achieve participation from those not attracted by the usual ways of working or who are traditionally excluded from participation?

d) What works in rural areas and what works in urban areas?

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